HQCA

Health Quality Council of Alberta

Partnering to achieve world-class excellence in all dimensions of quality and safety across Alberta's health system.

2004 – 2005 Annual Report

HQCA
Health Quality Council of Alberta

The Health Quality Council of Alberta was established in January 2002 as a result of the *Report of the Premier's Advisory Council on Health* (Mazankowski Report), which recommended establishing a permanent, independent outcomes commission. First called the Health Services Utilization and Outcomes Commission, the name and mandate expanded in February 2004 to become what we are today: the Health Quality Council of Alberta.

The Health Quality Council of Alberta is an arm's length organization empowered and funded by the Government of Alberta through the Minister of Health and Wellness to report directly to Albertans on the quality and performance of health services. The Council is charged with identifying best practices and reviewing and monitoring health care quality, including acceptability, accessibility, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency and safety. We also collaborate with stakeholders to continuously improve the quality and safety of the health system.

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Collaboration. Facilitation. Partnership.

These three words encapsulate the focus of the Health Quality Council of Alberta this past year. They are the foundation of the work we've done. They will continue to guide us as we listen to, inform and collaborate with Albertans to improve the quality and safety of our health system.

Change doesn't happen in isolation. Collaboration and partnerships are essential if we want to effect lasting change in our health system. In the past year, our many stakeholders – health regions, health professions, associations, boards, academia and government – have been a constant presence in our work. They energize and challenge us, and share our commitment of working together to achieve excellence in all dimensions of quality and safety across Alberta's health system.

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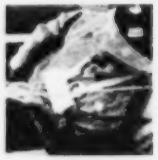
Alberta Health and Wellness Minister Iris Evans



Alberta's complex and diverse health care system provides high quality service to thousands of Albertans every day. The Health Quality Council of Alberta has the critical role of monitoring patient safety and satisfaction, and the quality and performance of our health system.

As Alberta works toward finding a Third Way for our province's health care system, it is more important than ever for the Health Quality Council of Alberta to report directly to Albertans. This will continue to ensure the operation of our health care system is accountable and transparent, and addresses quality and safety issues.

Alberta Health and Wellness is pleased to work together with the Health Quality Council of Alberta to identify concerns and make improvements so Albertans can maintain their confidence in our top quality health care system.

Honourable Iris Evans
Minister
Alberta Health and Wellness

The Chair and Chief Executive Officer

For over 20 years, industries throughout the world have been discovering that consistent delivery of the highest quality products and services results in growth and sustainability. While health care has been slower to discover this same truth, there is a growing recognition that like other industries before us, we are in the midst of an evolution toward the creation of higher quality and performing health systems that are acceptable, accessible, appropriate, effective, efficient and safe.

So what is the Health Quality Council of Alberta doing to help move the province closer to this vision? One of our most significant achievements has been initiating the Health Quality Network. Now in its second year, this group of representatives from health regions, health professions, associations, boards and government has collaborated on a number of projects with significant scope. A key result is the *Alberta Quality Matrix for Health*, a frame of reference for defining, mapping and measuring quality dimensions across areas of need. This shared conceptual quality framework has already played an integral role in facilitating system-wide communication and understanding among health care organizations, health regions and other stakeholders.

While we are committed to building partnerships, we are also focused on building a strong organization. We continue to make the Council more robust, adding staff in areas such as survey and data analysis and quality initiatives. We were pleased to welcome two new board members, Dr. Robert Johnston and Dr. Terry Klassen, both of whom provide additional depth and expertise to our organization. In 2005, we were saddened by the death of one of our original board members, Elaine Mills, whose dedication and contributions to the Council will be missed.

As we move forward, we continue to receive support from our many stakeholders including the nine health regions, the Alberta Cancer Board, the Alberta Mental Health Board, the regulated health professions and Alberta Health and Wellness. We especially thank the Honourable Iris Evans and her team at Alberta Health and Wellness for their ongoing commitment to our work.

We are committed to our role as facilitator and collaborator. We want to strengthen relationships with existing stakeholders. We want to build new partnerships with individuals and organizations in Alberta, across the country and around the world. These relationships are integral as we strive to improve quality and safety across Alberta's health system.

D. Lorne J. Tyrrell, OC, AOE, MD, PhD, FRCP
Board Chair
Health Quality Council of Alberta

John W. F. Cowell, MSc, MD, CCFP, FRCPC
Chief Executive Officer
Health Quality Council of Alberta

Reporting to Albertans:

Representing the Pulse of the People

Satisfaction with Health Care Services: Survey of Albertans 2004

Our mandate tasks us to capture the perceptions and actual experiences of Albertans. In 2003, we released the results of our first *Satisfaction with Health Care Services Survey*. This survey established a benchmark for learning what Albertans' general perceptions and actual experiences were when it came to overall quality, satisfaction, access, safety and acceptability with specific health services across the nine health regions.

The follow-up survey, which we released in December 2004, was done so we could begin to trend the data and identify patterns. It provided us with the following insights:

81% of respondents describe the overall quality of health care services as either excellent, very good or good.

72% said it was easy or very easy to find their present personal family doctor.*

45% said it was easy or very easy to obtain the health care services they needed.*

13% of respondents report they or a family member have experienced a medical mistake in the past year.

*A rating of 4 or 5 out of 5, where 1 means very difficult and 5 means very easy.

Health Report to Albertans 2004

In January 2005, we released our second *Health Report to Albertans*, which gives an overview of our provincial health care system and current comparative data. It also provides key measurements with respect to the health of our population. The publication brings research and information in areas such as cancer, mental health and motor vehicle safety together in one publication and reports it to Albertans.

Alberta Patient Safety Survey

In 2003, the HQCA's *Satisfaction with Health Care Services Survey* found that next to accessibility, safety is the most important factor Albertans associate with overall quality in the health system.

The survey also found that 30 per cent of those Albertans surveyed were concerned about safety. Fourteen per cent (14%) reported

they or an immediate family member had experienced a medical mistake within the past year that resulted in serious harm such as death, disability or additional prolonged treatment. These numbers were again corroborated in 2004, with 33 per cent of those surveyed saying they were concerned about patient safety and 13 per cent reporting they or a family member had experienced a medical mistake in the past year.

Based on these findings, the HQCA decided to learn more about Albertans' perceptions and actual experiences with medical errors, including specific details about the circumstances surrounding errors they had personally experienced. The telephone survey results (including quantitative and qualitative analyses) of Alberta's adult public will be released in autumn 2005.

The Health Quality Network: Fostering Change through Collaboration

We know change doesn't happen in isolation. Collaboration is key if we want to effect real change in our health care system. To address some of the issues Albertans identified in our health services satisfaction survey findings and to fulfill the Health Quality Council of Alberta's mandate of collaborating with stakeholders, the Council was instrumental in forming the Health Quality Network (HQN).

The HQN is a group of influencers and decision makers representing health regions, health professions, associations, boards and government. Together, they are working to share knowledge and transfer skills related to best practices throughout the province.

Alberta Quality Matrix for Health

In the past year, tangible outcomes have already emerged from the HQN. A major step was achieving agreement among all stakeholders to the *Alberta Quality Matrix for Health*, a frame of reference for mapping quality dimensions across areas of need. The dimensions and areas of need are well known in quality literature, but the HQN has placed them together in the matrix and defined them within the Alberta context.

Concerns Resolution Framework

Another tangible emerging from the HQN is the work we are doing on concerns resolution or complaint handling, as it is often referred to. Based on the results of the 2003 *Satisfaction with Health Care Services Survey*, which found that 19 per cent

of Albertans were satisfied with how complaints were handled, the Council organized public focus groups throughout the province that solicited specific feedback on people's experiences with concerns resolution processes within Alberta's health care system. Through the Health Quality Network, we are now developing a framework that provides an effective and consistent process for handling concerns across and between the health regions and regulated health professions.

Quality and Safety:

The Medication Safety Agenda in Alberta

The Health Quality Council of Alberta has adopted a proactive approach to medication safety by developing a comprehensive multi-year agenda to work with its partners and recognized experts to systematically identify, develop, implement, evaluate and update leading practices for handling medications most often associated with adverse events.

Provincial Disclosure Framework

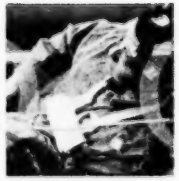
In 2004, the HQN began developing the *Provincial Disclosure Framework*, which provides guidelines for sharing information with patients and families when a patient experiences harm. Future work will explore the potential for sharing information about adverse events and improvement recommendations at the provincial level to foster learning between Alberta's health regions and the health professions.

Working for Continuous Improvement

Alberta Medication Safety Collaborative

One component of the HQCA's overall medication safety agenda will be pursued through the *Alberta Medication Safety Collaborative*, a partnership of the Council, Alberta's health regions' pharmacy leaders and the Alberta College of Pharmacists. The collaborative is supported by recognized experts including the Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada. This collaborative, which began in January 2005, will focus on improving medication safety in acute care hospitals. Priorities for 2005 include:

- Providing guidance and assistance to hospitals to enhance the safe use of narcotics;
- Completing a province-wide assessment of medication safety practices and identifying key opportunities for improvement;
- Eliminating the use of error-causing medication abbreviations, symbols and acronyms; and,
- Assist in building the medication safety expertise and capacity of Alberta's regional health authorities.



Hospital-Acquired Infections

In early 2005, the HQCA also began exploring potential areas where we can work with our partners on provincial-level initiatives related to hospital-acquired infections. One way we are doing this is by supporting the Western Canadian node of the *Safer Healthcare Now! Canadian Campaign*. This initiative is enlisting hospitals across Canada to implement changes to decrease infections that have been proven to prevent avoidable deaths. For more information, go to www.saferhealthcarenow.ca.

Best Practices Reviews

In 2004, the Health Quality Council of Alberta conducted a best practices review for safe handling of potassium chloride containing products in hospitals and the preparation of continuous renal replacement therapy (CRRT) dialysis solutions. The findings and recommendations were made public in July 2004. The Council also conducted a review of best practices for handling morphine-containing products in hospital emergency rooms. The findings and recommendations were released in June 2005. Both sets of recommendations can be found at www. hqca.ca.

2005 Quality and Safety Studentships

In 2005, the HQCA funded 15 studentships at four Alberta universities. The focus of these research studentships is quality and safety in the health care system. The research must fit within the quality matrix developed by the Health Quality Network. Each university is responsible for awarding the studentships.

Breast Cancer Screening Program

The Council is actively involved in the Alberta Breast Cancer Screening Program (ABCSP). This program is looking at how to best develop an integrated provincial breast cancer screening program in terms of planning, coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The HQCA is a member of three committees related to the program.

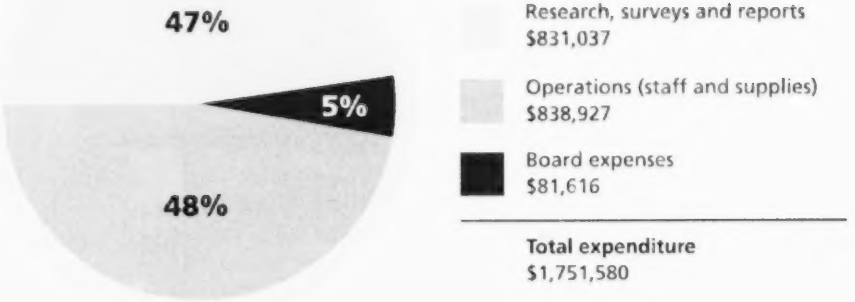
IHI National Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving health by advancing the quality and value of health care. Founded in 1991, IHI is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The *National Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care* is the IHI's annual conference, which brings together 4,000 health care leaders from around the world as well as 6,000 more participants via satellite. In December 2004, the HQCA again joined with the Calgary Health Region and Capital Health to bring the satellite broadcast from Orlando, Florida to Alberta, allowing health care providers, managers and researchers from across the province to participate. This year's conference takes place December 14-15, 2005.

Halifax 4: The Canadian Healthcare Safety Symposium

The Health Quality Council of Alberta, in partnership with Calgary Health Region, Capital Health, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, sponsored and organized the *Halifax 4 Symposium*. The symposium, which took place in Edmonton October 14-16, 2004, is Canada's premiere meeting place of individuals and organizations with a desire to improve patient safety and enhance the overall quality of the health system. *Halifax 5* will take place October 20-22, 2005 in Calgary.

Financial Summary: April 1, 2004 – March 31, 2005



The Health Quality Council of Alberta is pleased to report a positive variance at the end of the fiscal year 2004-2005. Careful monitoring of the funding allocation allowed the Council to add staff and increase activities that allow us to better work with our stakeholders. Through our facilitation and collaboration efforts, we are building partnerships we believe will help achieve excellence in all dimensions of quality and safety across Alberta's health system.

It is an ongoing challenge to balance the demands of an expanding organization; however, we remain committed to fiscal prudence and will continue to balance growth needs with available resources as we move forward. Our goal continues to be to fulfill the HQCA's mandate in the most cost-effective and efficient way. We are confident that with provincial support we will be able to successfully balance measured growth with fiscal responsibility.

HQCA
Health Quality Council of Alberta

Board Members

Lorne Tyrrell, MD, *Chair* • Bonnie Laing, *Vice-Chair* • Robert Johnston, MD • Terry Klassen, MD • Michael S. Lee, DDS • Peter Norton, MD • Linda Steinmann • Doug Tupper, P Eng

Operations Team

John Cowell, MD • *Chief Executive Officer*

Norma Brown • *Director of Operations*

Charlene McBrien-Morrison • *Research & Evaluation Manager*

Tim Cooke • *Surveys & Data Analysis Coordinator*

Christina Krause • *Quality Initiatives Coordinator*

Michael Plumb, PhD • *Project Consultant*

Pam Brandt • *Communications Manager*

Marnie Cleary • *Administrative Support*

Denise Hofmann • *Administrative Support*

Arlene Rider • *Administrative Support*

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